

Death in the Slave Pits of Lorr

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Introduction

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DV-9
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Death in the Slave Pits of Lorr
Or
What I Did On My Inter-Term Break
By Tash Arranda

Lorr is a sunny planet in the Kanz sector of the Outer Rim. Its major exports are delicious gapanga fruits, dazzling gemstones, and attractive stars of stage and holos. It is home to a talented, friendly people, and there are lots of interesting things to see and do. It looked like an excellent place to spend a vacation... until I crossed paths with crazed Imperial agents trying to unleash a terrible force from Lorr's horrific, bloody past. **[If I were an HC tutor droid and not an overqualified class-one scientific research unit, I might be impressed rather than resigned by this "attention getter" in the first paragraph.]**

If not for the Empire, I might not have visited Lorr at all. My brother Zak and I had arrived on Delaya at the end of a field trip discover to that our homeworld of Alderaan was gone, destroyed by the Empire. Our parents Kalf and Milessa were dead, but we had one living relative who took us in: Hoole, the brother of our aunt's Shi'ido husband Moloch.

That was the beginning of a series of adventures that brought us to Lorr. We encountered an evil Imperial scientist's terrifying experiments and crash-landed on a haunted planet. Our starship, the *Shroud*, was in terrible shape after the crash, and Zak and Uncle Hoole had given the ship up as dead. Of course, *Zak* has come back from the dead twice now, so maybe we should have known better. Fortunately, the Rebel Alliance offered to salvage the ship after we helped them put an end to the scientist's project.



A Rebel named Han Solo brought us to Lorr, where he had a friend with connections and a starship repair facility. This excited Uncle Hoole... well, it made him less grim than usual anyway. Uncle Hoole had always wanted to study the Lorradians. They are known throughout the galaxy as masters of mimicry -- a culture our changeling uncle would naturally take an interest in, even if he was not an anthropologist. Uncle Hoole's interest matched my own, for in ancient times Lorr had been set free by legendary guardians of freedom and justice, the object of my aspirations: the Jedi Knights.

The Occupation

"Forbidden from speaking aloud by their Argazdan enslavers, the Lorradians developed a sophisticated nonverbal language. Using this "kinetic communication", the Lorradians organized a rebellion that would eventually help end Argazdan rule. The implication for present day government is clear: harsh laws to end dissent will only ensure the downfall of their enforcers." -- Legal historian Janu Godalhi

Thousands of years ago, Lorr was targeted by a secessionist faction led by Governor Myrial of nearby Argazda. Condemning the Republic as a faithless, morally corrupt institution, the "Myrialites" took advantage of the Republic's preoccupation with the Mandalorian Wars and staged a revolution that left them in control of the Kanz sector, which they renamed the Argazdan Redoubt. They then began attacking and enslaving systems throughout the sector in what came to be known as the Kanz Disorders. When the Lorradians allied with the

Amaltannan resistance against their enslavers, Myrial punished them with enslavement, and forbade them from speaking on pain of death.

I knew from my study of Jedi legends that three hundred years later, Jedi Knights led by Mari-Elan Nora freed the Lorrdians. I could not wait to learn more about what the Jedi had done on Lorrd thousands of years ago -- and we were heading to where it had all happened.

Solo's friend Fiolla's operation was located in Qatamer, which is the capital of the province of Kinyov and is considered the birthplace of modern Lorrdian culture. Kinyov is mostly desert and was sparsely inhabited during the initial Argazdan attacks, which is why it did not get bombed from orbit like Frezen, New Shallos, and other major settlements. Refugees from all over Lorrd fled here, but were rounded up by Argazdan troops and sold as slaves. The invaders turned Qatamer, once a tiny desert outpost, into the headquarters for their occupation and slaving operations.



As the *Millennium Falcon* began its approach to Qatamer spaceport, I was amazed to see what could only be the legendary Slave Pits of Lorrd. Not that they are hard to spot -- even the smallest one is larger in diameter than the Ancient Abyss of Felucia -- but their location had been lost for millennia; and many people had come to believe the Pits were a myth. Uncle Hoole explained that archaeologists had discovered the buried Slave Pits using images taken from satellites, and had begun excavations months ago. How he finds time to keep up with anthropological subjects and track dangerous Imperial experiments across the galaxy I will never know. **[I imagine it has absolutely nothing to do with having an eminently capable research assistant with the brain capacity of a supercomputer.]**

Almost three hundred years into the Disorders, the Argazdans ordered their slaves to excavate massive pits, mysterious cone-shaped depressions. The Pits were built entirely by hand, at the cost of innumerable Lorrdian slaves. Naturally, the Argazdans possessed a level of technology on par with other ancient civilizations, like droids and heavy machinery, so this fact remains perplexing.

And there was another mystery: control of the excavations had recently been taken from Lorrdian archaeologists and given to an Argazdan scientist named Raygar. Uncle Hoole knew Raygar by reputation. The archaeologist had been involved in the Wolhanian expedition to Yavin, but now lacked the support of any reputable university or museum and was obsessed with locating mystical artifacts. So what was Raygar expecting to find in the Pits, and how did he manage to take control of the most important archaeological site on Lorrd?

Hart and Parn Starships

"I'll let my staff know that you kids are free to look around. Just remember: if you break it, you bought it." -- Auditor-General Fiolla, owner, Hart and Parn Starships

We met Fiolla by hologram. She was busy conducting an audit on Daermor, but offered to arrange for us to stay with one of her friends. This angered Captain Solo, who said that he trusted her but not her associates, whatever that meant. Fiolla replied that her friend was a high ranking government official and far more sympathetic towards Han's associates -- I guess she thought we were Rebels too -- than she was. Han finally caved, and the Rebel transport dropped the Shroud off at Hart and Parn Starships.

It was the biggest starship dealership I had ever seen -- ten times the size of Meego's Starship Emporium on Necropolis. Fiolla had explained that it was originally a family landspeeder dealership. She had never wanted to run it herself, but she had invested some of the fortune she made in the Corporate Sector into expanding the business into starship sales. Fiolla also had several full service repair bays constructed, which is where the Shroud would be restored. Since Fiolla is a CSA Auditor-General, she has enough influence to keep the Empire from snooping around and discovering our ship.

Here we met Fiolla's old friend Governor Zenobia le Ingiana of Kinyov. While Uncle Hoole arranged for us to stay with her, Zak and I checked out the starships on the showroom floor. We were admiring a restored R-22 Spearhead fighter, when its targeting system suddenly activated!

Our New Friend

"You know what those slave pits are? The Argazdians were going to have the galaxy's biggest poi fish pond. If the Republic hadn't stepped in, their next project would have been a gargantuan gazebo." -- Kal zet Berri

We thought we had been discovered, until the governor's son Kal climbed out of the cockpit laughing. Kal was not much older than us, had long black hair, and wore a shabby looking military jacket.

Lorrdians are supposed to be incredibly perceptive, and Kal knew right away that Zak and I were from Alderaan. We were annoyed by his joke (it caused us to be escorted from the dealership) but he sounded genuinely regretful at our planet's fate. Kal told us that his own father, one of the governor's previous husbands, had been killed in a speeder accident around the same time. Kal had been in the accident too -- he had a terrible scar on his face -- and had been seeing a doctor for treatment for months.



We shared a common interest in starships. Zak loves anything to do with mechanics, and Kal and I have always wanted to be pilots. Kal said he was studying to enter the Sebs Jemas Flight School in Lorrd City, and even hinted that he might join the Alliance.

I had no idea that he might not be telling the whole truth. **[Really, Tash. Is this drama really necessary?]**

Crypt of Martyrs

"The practice of owning sentient beings is perpetuated throughout the galaxy. Lorrdians of conscience have an obligation to seek out this practice, whatever its guise, and to end it, whatever the cost." -- Salis Kabor, Lorrdian revolutionary

With some time to kill before the *Shroud* was repaired, we began visiting some of Qatamer's historic sites. One of the most important is the Crypt of Martyrs, where Lorrdians who have given their lives fighting slavery are laid to rest. Like the Halls of Evidence on Melida/Daan, each tomb has a small holoprojector to play recordings of the dead for the Crypt's few visitors.

All the memorials told inspiring stories of the fight against injustice: the brothers Jemas, who vanished during the Clone Wars, the Serter Market Rebellions, Kabor's Kessel revolts... But there was one I wanted to see more than all the others: the grave of Mari-Elan Nora, the Jedi who led the liberation of Lorrd.

A descendant of Lorrdians rescued from a lunar slave colony by Jedi Knights, Nora joined the Order and vowed to bring justice to her ancestral home. Though a Sith uprising had shaken the Republic, Nora gained enough support in the Senate to end the Kanz Disorders. The Argazdians fought bitterly to keep their territory and slaves, but the Jedi and Republic soldiers led by Nora proved victorious. Nora later served as the Jedi Watchman for the Kanz sector, until she was killed by slavers on Noremac.



I thought that was the end of the story. But as the biographical hologram faded, another hologram appeared. This time, it was Master Nora herself, and somehow I felt this message was for me alone. She told of the final battle on Lorrd, how the Argazdians had fled to the chambers within the Slave Pits...and vanished. The Jedi and other soldiers sent in to flush them out had never returned. Although she could not sense it, Nora believed that something evil lurked in the Pits. Nora had ordered that the Pits be filled in, and their existence obscured. Whatever was down there, it was enough to spook even a Jedi.

Via: The Glorious Radiance

"Like the ancient Argazdians, we believe in the third tenant of Via: sacrifice. We give up our lives to serve Via...but unlike the Myrialites, we do not force others to do the same." -- Sister Sigil

There are many beautiful places of worship in the galaxy, but the Temple of the Glorious Radiance is *not* one of them. The temple is an ancient transport ship *Via's Aura*, grounded for thousands of years and surrounded by portable housing units converted into libraries, alter rooms, dorms, and vestries. The Sisterhood of the Glorious Radiance values function over form.

An elderly sister, Sigil, volunteered to be our guide. She was a member of the Sisterhood who had lived in seclusion for decades. She sounded very old indeed, but the Sisters wear robes and masks among outsiders to hide the scripture tattooed on their bodies. Sigil told us about her religion, which is one of the oldest in the galaxy.

Although unheard of in the Core worlds for nearly twenty thousand years, Vianists still worship the deities once venerated by ancient human societies such as the Zhell and the Seoulians. Vianism was brought to the Kanz sector by a lost colony from the Core, the ancestors of the Argazdians. Before the Disorders, Argazdan missionaries spread Vianism both to Kanz sector natives such as the Sipsk'ud and newer arrivals like the settlers on Lorr'd.

At the center of Vianism is a mother goddess, Via in the Argazdan tongue, with two other entities representing aspects of the goddess: the Beatific Countenance and the Glorious Radiance. The Glorious Radiance was of interest to me, as it is described as an energy that radiates from the goddess, connecting her to all life in the galaxy. This sounds like how the Jedi describe the Force, and indeed Sister Sigil explained that her order once had many Force-sensitives.

In the early years of the Argazdan invasion, the Glorious Radiance attracted many Force-sensitives who were unable to be recruited by the Jedi, and it was this sect that began working against the Argazdians. One of the three major tenets of Via is service to others, by anticipating the needs of those around them. At the time, this involved sensing those needs through the Force, but non-Force-sensitive initiates were instead taught to read subtle changes in body languages.

After Governor Myrial's cracked down on Lorr'd, the Sisters began teaching this art to outsiders, allowing secret communication among the slaves. The Argazdians suspected the Sisters's were up to something, but could not act directly against them, as they were affiliated with the Argazdan religion. Myrial instead ordered them to be relocated to an isolated slave colony on Lorr'd II, the planet's largest moon.

During the latter part of the Mandalorian Wars, the rogue Revanchist Jedi raided the colony and freed the slave population. This wasn't done for justice; it was an effort to obtain Lorr'dian gemstones. As a form of meditation, the Sisters reportedly imprinted Lorr'dian gemstones with the Force. This was said to allow the bearers of the gems to anticipate the actions of sentient beings, and they made excellent lightsaber crystals. Sadly, by this time few Sisters with Force sensitivity remained.

After the planet's liberation almost three hundred years later, the Sisters returned from exile in *Deejo's Aura* to help Lorr'd recover from the occupation. Now Sister Sigil wants to challenge the Empire, just as her order had attempted to thwart the Argazdians years ago.

Growing Rebellion

"If Lorr'd does not act, we will become slaves to an empire once more." --Senator Nee Alavar

Although many Lorr'dians have joined the rebellion against the Empire, the Rebel groups on Lorr'd itself remain very scattered. The governor explained that Lorr'dian Senator Nee Alavar had signed a petition against the Emperor's policies before he assumed the throne. Not long after, Alavar was arrested and brutally executed, and her entire family sentenced to labor camps as an example to others. Those who have joined the Rebellion have generally left the planet to keep their families from also being targeted.

Before his execution, Salis Kabor had attempted to unify the few dissident groups on Lorr'd with the Alliance, and revive the guerrilla forces that had fought the Argazdan occupation. Sigil was dedicated to these same goals, but she had been isolated for decades and lacked Kabor's Rebel contacts. She was very interested in the Rebels who had brought us to Lorr'd, but we had no way of contacting them except through Fiolla, who refused to get involved. Nevertheless, meetings between Sigil, the governor, and several interested individuals took place in the mansion over the next few days. The building gave these plotters a sense of security, as it was once a small fortress built for the Argazdan slave masters and it is still more like a stronghold than a household.

Performance Square and the Culture of Lorr'd

"From the restaurant server who anticipates an imminent need for napkins to the improvisational street performer capable of imitating hundreds of species, Lorr'dians are capable of responding to your every expression and they are sure to make your visit to Lorr'd a delight. As long as you don't play sabacc with them, that is." -- Ebenn Q3 Baobab

While these meetings took place, we did our best to keep out of the way. Kal offered to show us around Qatamer, a colorful city with brightly painted buildings that stand out in the sandy plains. The few remaining Argazdan structures, made of sinister looking black stone, stick out like sore thumbs, as did the green-skinned Argazdians I saw. I was surprised that they seemed to get along with the Lorr'dians but Kal explained that present day Argazdians look back on the Kanz Disorders with shame.

We visited Performance Square, a massive complex devoted to celebrating Lorr'dian art and entertainment. The 17-level "Square" is actually octagon-shaped, but takes its name from an ancient gathering place in New Shallos razed by the Argazdians. All the levels face an open-air courtyard, and each has many different theaters and performing areas, all with facades representing different types of Lorr'dian architecture. Performers unable to book the theaters perform wherever they can find space in the courtyard. Kal says it is a prime place to find new talent, and pointed out agents and talent scouts from Coruscant, Adarlön, Per Lupelo, and other worlds.

The recent rediscovery of the Slave Pits has led to a great deal of interest in the landmarks, and several theaters featured shows about them. We enjoyed a performance of *Torphceris*, a tragedy by the classical Lorradian playwright Pordi zet Chatc. The plot is based on the legends surrounding the Slave Pits. Torphceris was the Argazdan Regent during the end of the Kanz Disorders, and was desperate to retain his power in the face of Republic intervention. In the play he goes against his faith to seek the help of a demon architect, who promises to give him the power to summon a vast, destructive force. Using the Argazdan's slaves on Lorr, the architect builds the Pits, in which she brews a terrible, sinister power.

In this play the Argazdians are not villains, but cowards who surrender their beliefs to hold on to what power they have. Even though this play was written hundreds of years ago, the parallels between the Argazdians and the Empire are clear. Kal said that while this play remained faithful to the text, the actors were using *kinetic communication* to give their dialogue an additional anti-Imperial edge. In this fashion, Lorradians can express their discontent with the Empire without alerting the Imperial censors.

Even so, the Empire is everywhere. As we were leaving, we saw several Lorradians defacing a newly-installed Imperial vid-palace, tearing down posters that read "Coming Soon: *Jungle Flutes*". We became separated from Kal in the crowd, and while we waited for him I saw a tall man wearing the garments of an Argazdan slave lord sweep past us. At first I assumed he was one of the actors in costume, but then I recognized him as Dr. Raygar. Both the Argazdians and the Lorradians in the crowd were extremely offended by his attire, and a few spat on his robes as he passed by.

Zak and I decided to follow Raygar and find out who was behind his expedition. We tailed him to a secluded docking bay... where two hulking battle droids waited.

Codename: Diamond

"Those traitors will never suspect that I have infiltrated their council. The rebellion on Lorr will be over before it begins." -- Agent Diamond

Fortunately, the droids seemed to be programmed for combat, not surveillance, and Zak and I hid as Raygar argued with a shadowy figure. Raygar addressed her as Agent Diamond, and reported that he had entered the central pit and would be able to remove the weapon. Diamond replied that his theories had better be correct this time. Raygar stated that both of their tasks must be completed, or neither of them would regain the Emperor's favor.

Diamond was hidden from view, but I could tell she had long black hair and a chilling feminine voice -- a female Imperial spy? She said she had infiltrated the Rebel sympathizers and would soon have all the information needed to expose them. Raygar left, stating that he would claim for the Emperor what had been promised to the ancient Argazdians: a weapon that would shatter the galaxy. **[I must object to the false jeopardy and melodramatic suspense at the end of every section. This is an informative essay, not a holodrama.]**

A Spy Among Us

"The Empire again? Why am I not surprised?" -- Uncle Hoole

We seem to find Imperial plots wherever we go. Maybe the Force wants us to fight the Empire. Maybe that is why we survived Alderaan. Or maybe we were supposed to die there. That scientist we defeated was interested in me over a year ago. Did he know that Alderaan would be targeted? Did he arrange for our field trip? Will we be haunted by the Empire wherever we go? **[Unnecessary speculation. This is an informative essay, not a journal entry.]**

Knowing that the Empire was active in the city, we stuck around the governor's residence with Kal. He is a really prime sabacc player -- if we still had allowances, Kal would have cleaned us out. He is quite intelligent, but has a weird sense of humor. Kal and Zak played a trick on Uncle Hoole, which I went along with for some reason. Kal could imitate my voice perfectly, and we both shouted for help from different parts of the mansion. Seeing our usually composed uncle racing around like a crazed Mimbanite was hilarious -- but it was a really immature prank and I never should have let Zak talk me into it.

We had already warned the governor about the spy, but Zak had a disturbing thought: what if Diamond was already here? He had an even crazier notion: Kal was Diamond. They looked similar, Kal had disappeared before we saw Diamond, he had access to Sigil... I thought the idea was absurd -- after all, Diamond did not sound like Kal... but Zak had just proven that Kal could sound like whoever he wanted. I wanted to prove Zak wrong, so I searched for Kal in the planetary database.

This was tougher than it sounds, as Lorradians have no given names or surnames -- instead, they have a unique combination of names of relatives and ancestors. Some Lorradians have as many as twenty names, and they can go by any of them. In order to search for records on a specific individual, you have to know every one of their names in the correct order.

What I eventually found was disturbing. Kal had no records more than eight months old. I found news stories on the death of Kal's father... but nothing to indicate that anyone else had been with him during the accident. So how did he get that scar?

We decided to keep an eye on Kal, and one night we saw a cloaked figure slip out of his room and through a secret passageway -- an old Argazdan escape route! We followed the tiny, winding passage to a kilometers-long tunnel, where we found a hoversled. Diamond must have taken one to get any farther, so we proceeded slowly down the tunnel for what seemed like hours. Finally, we came into the open air. We were at the bottom of a huge pit -- the Great Slave Pit of Lorrd!

We did not have long before we were ambushed by Diamond and Raygar.

The Slave Pits

"With over 25,000 years of computer records alone, the idea that anything -- artifacts, cities, weapons -- has been 'lost' is absurd. In my experience, if something can't be found, it's because someone wanted it that way." -- Dr. Corellia Antilles



We were quickly taken captive by Raygar's battle droids. It turned out we were wrong about the spy. Sister Sigil's robes and elderly voice had concealed a young woman -- Diamond's true identity. She had data tapes of the secret meetings, evidence that would doom the rebels on Lorrd. And if we did not act fast, we too would be turned over to the Empire. Hoping to stall for time, I asked Raygar what this ancient Argazdan weapon was.

He did not know, but he knew where it had come from. Raygar had discovered that the creator of the pits had been found by Argazdan patrols on the very edge of the Redoubt. What they had first taken to be an asteroid was a spacecraft, frozen in some kind of stasis for centuries. The Argazdan scientists were able to revive its pilot, who spent decades in Argazdan custody. The alien learned the Argazdan tongue, though the Redoubt's linguists were unable to figure out the alien's language. Incredibly, the alien claimed to have come from the great void beyond the galaxy's edge.

This alien stated that she was a kind of artisan-scientist, and had been testing a new type of star drive, with a range greater than any her people had known. The drive had malfunctioned, scattering her test ships across the Outer Rim.

This was the figure behind the legends, the demon to which the Argazdians had turned to in desperation, who refused to use any of the technology the Argazdians offered her, and who had sacrificed thousands of slaves to create what lay within the pit.

That weapon, capable of summoning great destructive power, was just beyond a massive door in the center of the pit. Raygar explained that he had figured out the only way to open the door and retrieve what lay beyond.

A human sacrifice.

Death in the Slave Pits

"The symbols on the Deejo tablets call the creator of the Slave Pits 'habensa' --which in modern Argazdan means 'one who builds', and is considered synonymous with the Basic word architect. Three thousand years ago, however, the term would have had an entirely different meaning: 'one who sculpts', or more specifically 'one who shapes'." -- Dr. Heilan Rotham

Diamond scoffed at the notion, but Raygar was dead set on it, explaining that not only was it necessary, it might also eliminate two mynocks with one bolt. Diamond nodded, saying that Vader would take us dead anyway. Before Zak or I could do anything, though, Diamond crumpled to the ground -- Raygar had stabbed his own conspirator in the back!

We turned away, not wanting to see what Raygar would do next. Whatever he did, it worked...but I do not think Raygar had expected what happened. Something was awakened. The pit began shaking and rumbling, and we had to run for cover as the floor splintered and cracked. A gargantuan, amphibious form crawled from the center of the pit. The alien monster was over fifteen meters tall -- and it was coming for us!

We were able to escape from Raygar, who fled to his ship. We managed to leave the pit using the hoversled, but we knew that if the monster were to escape the pit, it could level half of Qatamer. Unfortunately, Raygar had thought of this, and launched a thermal detonator to cover his tracks.

We thought we were done for until Kal arrived, piloting an R-22 "borrowed" from Hart and Parn's showroom. We made it away from the explosion in time, but the starfighter



was damaged. Kal took it in stride, though, saying that maybe Fiolla would let him buy the fighter now.

We all had explaining to do. Kal's identity was false, but he is no Imperial agent. His real name is Garik Loran, a holodrama actor. His scar is real -- he was recently caught in a crossfire between Rebels and Imperials -- but the rest was a disguise. He did not want the Empire to know he was still alive, so the governor took him in as a favor to his parents. He had confronted Sigil that night, so she had stunned him -- which was why we had seen her near his room. He was glad to hear that, as he put it "Diamond won't be back for the sequel."

The explosion Raygar had been forced to set off vaporized the creature, the pits, and Diamond's tapes. Unless the Emperor believes his stories about giant monsters and aliens from the void, I imagine he will have a hard time getting Imperial funding for future expeditions.

One question remains: was the creature from the Slave Pits the weapon Mari-Elan Nora feared? It certainly reminded me of the Imperial bioengineered creatures we have encountered. But Deevee believed there was another possibility. [At last, credit where credit is due.] Deevee noted the similarities between the layout of the slave pits and ancient radio telescopes. It is possible that the pits were not for breeding weapons, but a system of organic receivers...or transmitters. Fortunately, the creatures had remained dormant for thousands of years, so the Architect never had a chance use them.

Unless, of course, they were transmitting the whole time.

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[After the adventures on Kiva and Lorrd, I believe I've had all the excitement my servos can take. I will be leaving the *Shroud* when we reach Koaan. As this will be the last assignment you will receive from me, I have seen fit to give this rambling and uneven collection of information a passing grade -- however, you may find your uncle is not as forgiving as I am.]